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Insights into hours worked, August 2020

Released 17/09/2020

Source: [Labour Force, Australia, August 2020](#)

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Hours worked fell by 9.5% between March and April in seasonally adjusted terms, which was double the fall in employed people (4.7%). After this large fall in April, the decline in hours worked slowed considerably into May, with hours worked decreasing by a further 1.0%. Between May and June, hours worked began to recover, increasing by 4.2%, alongside a 1.9% increase in employment. In July, hours worked increased by another 1.3%.

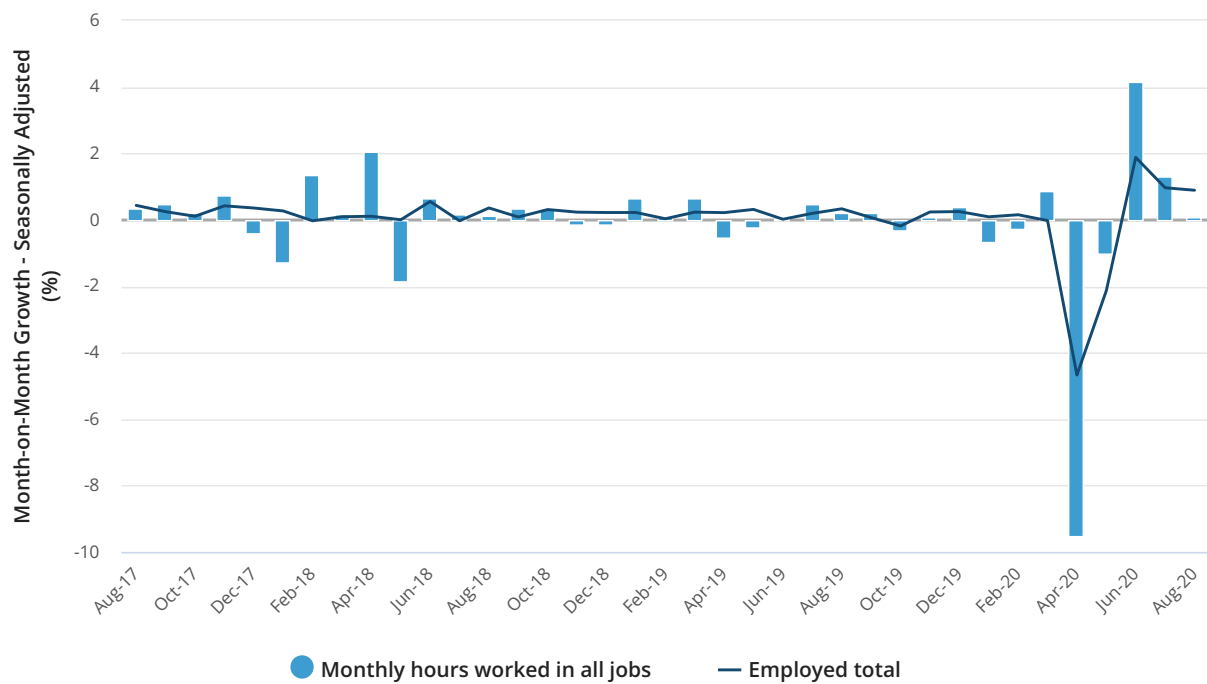
While employment continued to grow strongly in August (up 0.9%), the recovery in hours worked slowed, with a 0.1% increase recorded. This small increase reflected a 4.8% decrease in hours worked in Victoria, with all other states and territories recording a combined increase of 1.8%. Further information on state and territory hours worked can be found in [State and territory employment and hours worked \(/articles/state-and-territory-employment-and-hours-worked\)](#) insights.

Since the low point in May, total hours worked has increased by 89.5 million hours, recovering almost half (48%) of the 186 million hours decrease between March and May. However, hours worked in August were still 5.4% lower than March.

Charts 1, 2 and 3 show the monthly changes in seasonally adjusted hours worked and employment for all people, men and women. Both male and female hours continued to rise between June and July, following the large increases between May and June. Hours worked for women continued to show stronger growth, following the much larger fall in female

hours early in the COVID-19 period. In August, there was no growth in male hours worked, while there was a small (0.2%) increase in female hours worked.

Chart 1: Change in employment and hours worked



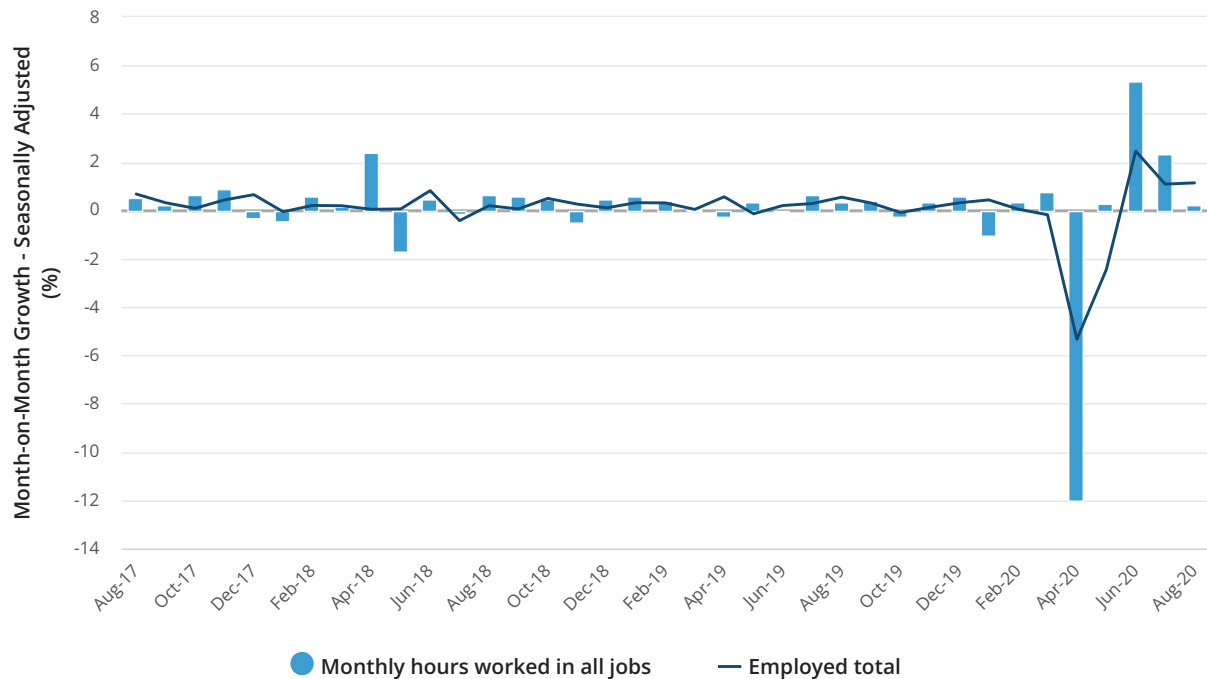
Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Chart 2: Change in employment and hours worked, males



Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Chart 3: Change in employment and hours worked, females

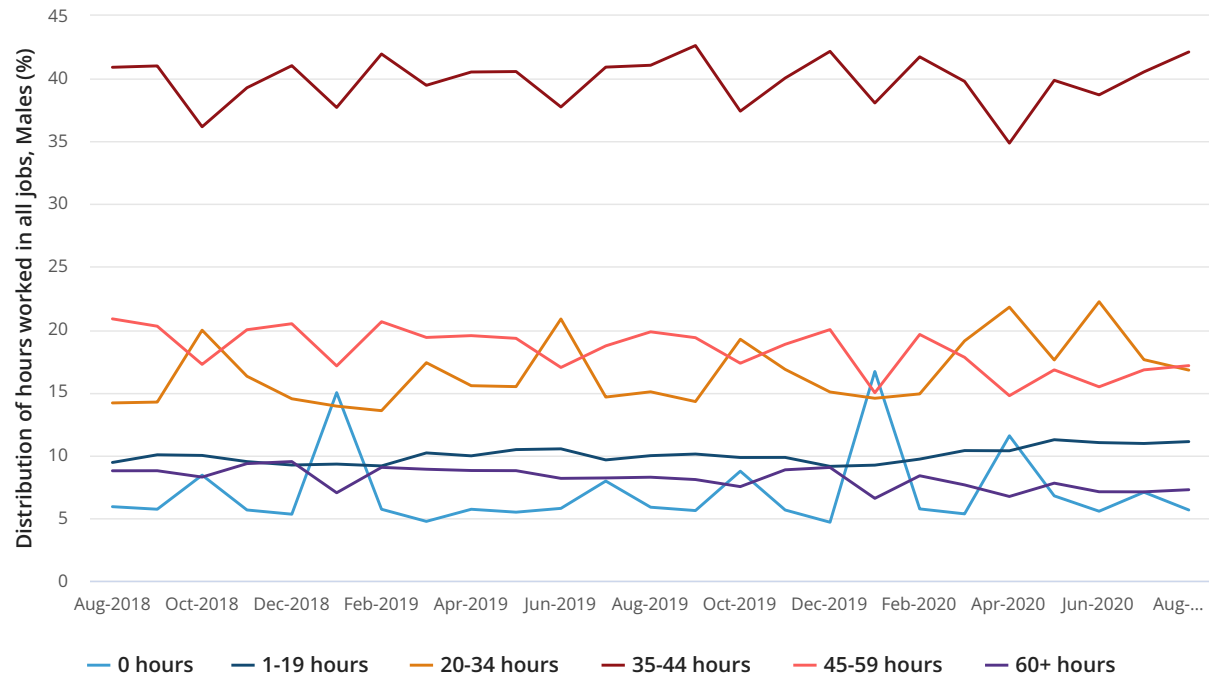


Source: 6202.0 Tables 1 and 19

Hours worked ranges

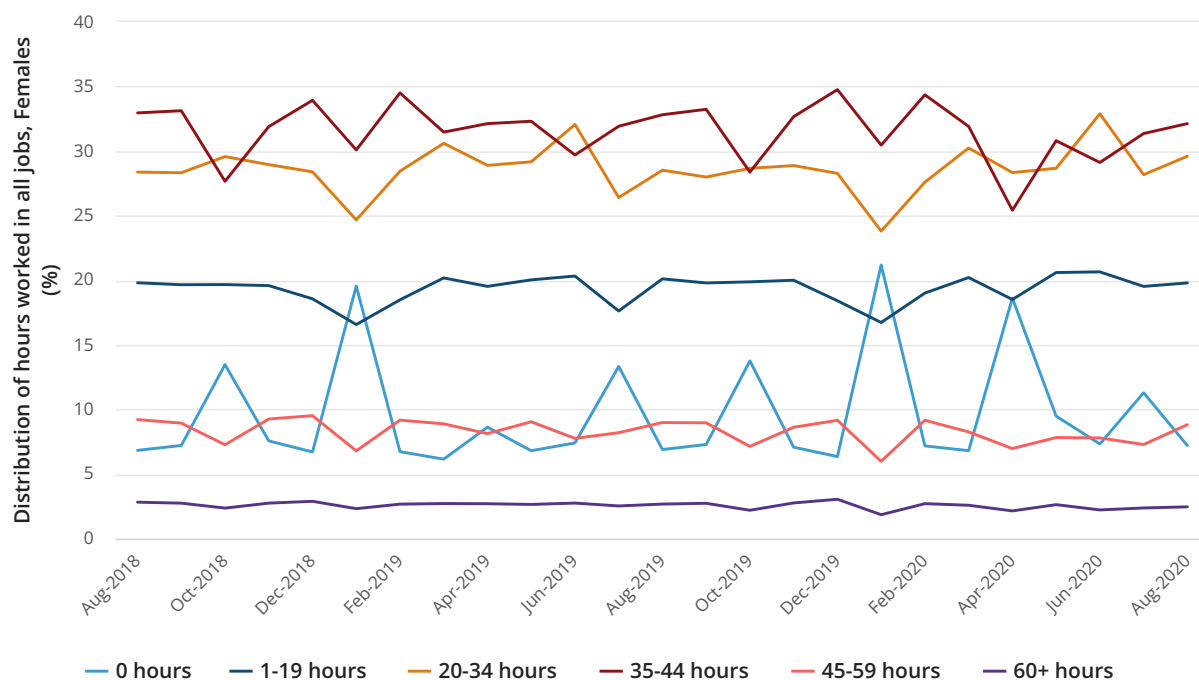
It is also illuminating to examine the number of people working within various hours ranges. Charts 4 and 5 show the distribution of employed men and women across the hours worked categories over the past two years.

Chart 4: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Males, Original



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Table 9

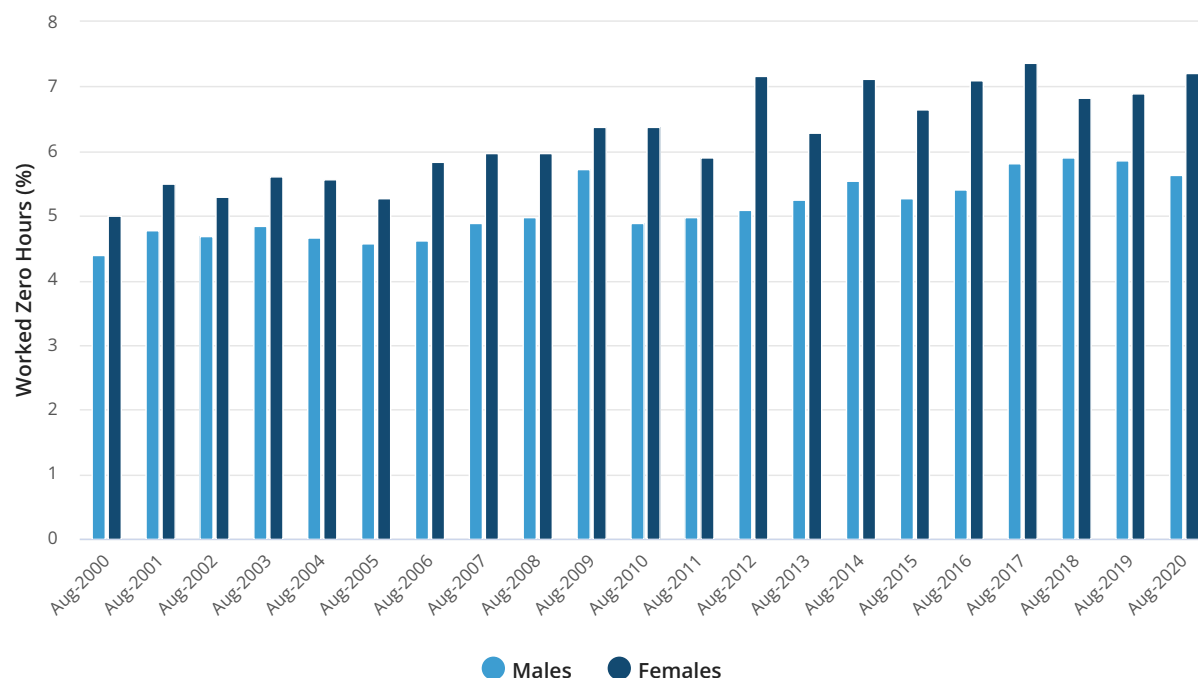
Chart 5: Distribution of hours worked in all jobs, Females, Original



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Table 9

Chart 6 shows that the proportion of employed men and women who worked zero hours in August 2020 was relatively similar to levels in August of previous years, only slightly higher for women and slightly lower for men. These year-to-year comparisons were very different to the record highs for men and women that were seen in April and May 2020 (relative to April and May in previous years).

Chart 6: Proportion of employed working zero hours, Original



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Table 9

Flows between hours worked categories from July to August

Table 1 shows the proportion of people in each of the hours worked categories in August by their hours worked in July.

Of the employed people who worked zero hours in August, 29% (over 200,000 people) had also worked zero hours in July - indicating that they have been paid for at least some of the past 4 weeks (otherwise they would no longer be classified as employed). This was considerably lower than the 45% recorded between April and May, and the 40% recorded between May and June, but higher than the 22% between June and July.

Almost 11% of the employed people who worked zero hours in August were not employed in July (again, indicating that they received some pay despite not working any hours). This was a slight increase on July (9%), but lower than previous months (16% in June, and 14% in

May).

There were also over 120,000 people (1.6%) who moved from working zero hours in July to being not employed in August. This was similar to what was observed between June and July (120,000), but lower than between May and June (150,000), and April and May (450,000).

August								
	0 hours	1-19 hours	20-34 hours	35-44 hours	45-59 hours	60+ hours	Not employed*	
July	0 hours	28.9	7.6	7.4	5.2	6.4	5.8	1.6
	1-19 hours	17.6	55.5	12.3	3.2	3.4	2.1	2.3
	20-34 hours	17.3	18.7	52.3	12.6	8.2	3.9	1
	35-44 hours	17	5.4	20.6	67.2	25	9.3	0.8
	45-59 hours	5.4	2.3	3	8.5	48.4	24.6	0.3
	60+ hours	3.1	0.8	0.7	1.4	7.2	52.4	0.1
	Not employed*	10.7	9.9	3.7	1.9	1.4	1.9	94
	Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Longitudinal Labour Force microdata 6602.0

* Not employed includes all people who were unemployed or not in the labour force.

People working reduced hours

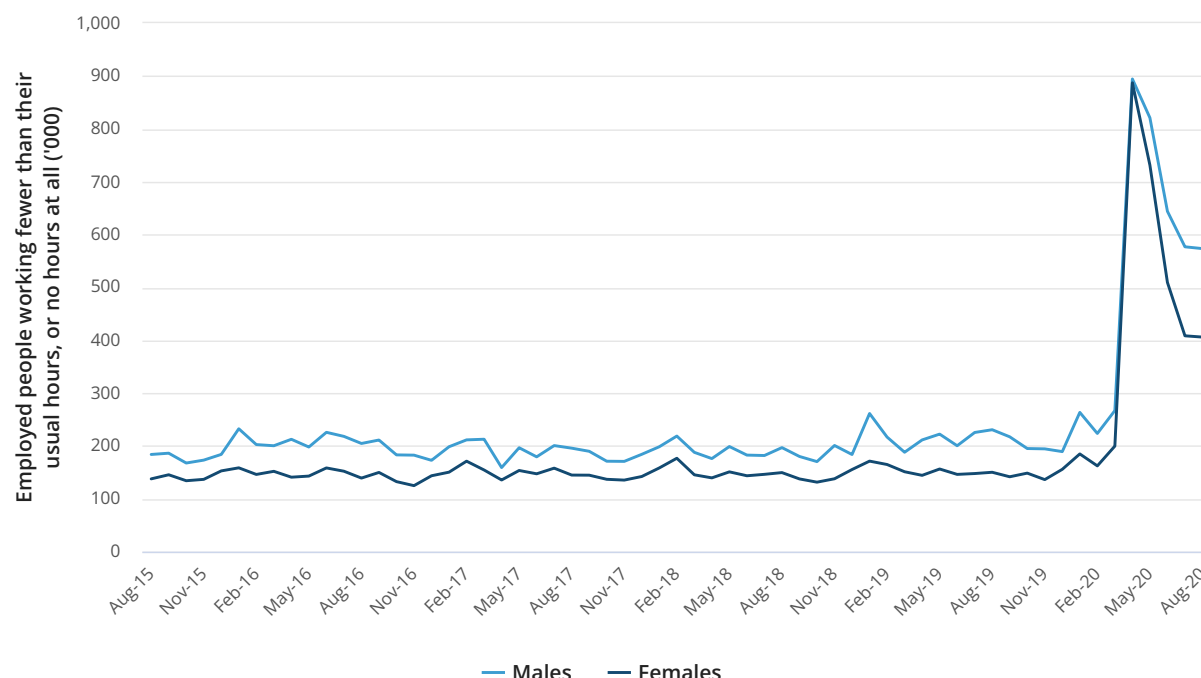
Chart 7 shows the number of men and women working fewer than their usual hours, or no hours at all, over the past 5 years. The number of men and women who worked fewer than their usual hours (or no hours at all) had a similar peak in April (at around 900,000 for both), however, the subsequent reductions have been much greater for women (a fall of 481,100 since April, compared to over 321,000 for men).

The decline in the number of employed men and women working reduced hours (or not hours at all) from the peak in April has flattened, with the level recorded in August similar to July for both men and women.

Overall, there were almost one million people who worked fewer than their usual hours for economic reasons in August 2020, a decrease of almost 800,000 since April 2020 (when it was around 1.8 million people). This comprised:

- 400,000 'underemployed full-time workers' (i.e. full-time who worked less than 35 hours in the reference week);
- over 130,000 full-time workers who worked less than their usual hours in the reference week but still worked 35 hours or more; and
- almost 450,000 part-time workers.

Chart 7: Employed people working fewer than their usual hours, or no



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Data Cube EM2a

Of the almost one million employed people who worked less than their usual hours for economic reasons in August:

- around 215,000 (or 22%) did not work at all; and
- over 760,000 worked some hours, but fewer hours than they usually work.

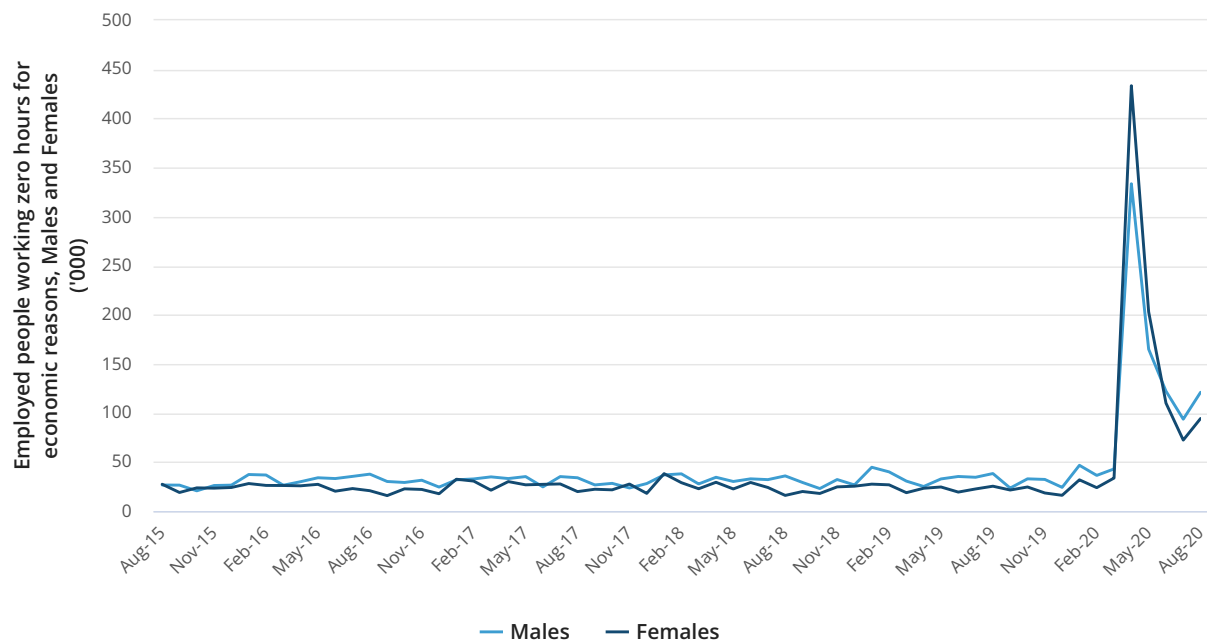
Following a 700,000 increase between March and April, the number of people working zero hours for economic reasons decreased by over 600,000 between April and July. However, between July and August it increased by almost 50,000 (a 30% increase).

Around 60% of people who worked zero hours for economic reasons in August usually work part-time hours. This was higher than the proportion of all people who worked less hours than usual (46% of whom usually work part-time hours).

Chart 8 shows that the number of men and women working zero hours for economic

reasons increased between July and August, following the declines recorded since the peak in April.

Chart 8: Employed people working zero hours for economic reasons, Males and Females, Original



Source: 6291.0.55.001 Data Cube EM2a

A further 90,000 employed people did not work at all as they began, left or lost a job. The majority of these people left or lost a job. Two-thirds of the people who left or lost a job were in Victoria

Table 2 shows the number of people (and share of all employed) working zero hours for economic reasons in each state or territory. All states and territories recorded very large increases in people working zero hours for economic reasons between March and April, followed by a steady decrease to July. Between July and August, some states recorded modest increases, while in Victoria the number (and share) of people working zero hours for economic reasons almost doubled.

Table 2: People working zero hours for economic reasons, by State and territory, Original

	Aug-20		Jul-20		Jun-20		May-20		Apr-20		Mar-20	
	('000)	% of all Employed	('000)	% of all Employed	('000)	% of all Employed	('000)	% of all Employed	('000)	% of all Employed	('000)	% Empl
NSW	45.8	1.1%	41.6	1.0%	63.7	1.6%	121.2	3.1%	261.2	6.7%	30.8	
Victoria	113.0	3.5%	65.6	2.0%	80.7	2.5%	102.8	3.2%	229.8	6.9%	22.7	
Queensland	26.2	1.1%	28.4	1.2%	51.0	2.1%	64.9	2.8%	126.9	5.2%	12.0	
SA	10.1	1.2%	9.5	1.1%	11.6	1.4%	23.5	2.9%	48.0	5.8%	4.5	
WA	15.7	1.2%	15.4	1.2%	17.7	1.4%	42.0	3.3%	69.2	5.3%	4.8	
Tasmania	2.7	1.1%	3.8	1.5%	4.5	1.8%	9.1	3.8%	16.8	6.7%	1.4	
NT	0.5	0.4%	0.8	0.6%	1.3	1.0%	2.3	1.7%	5.1	3.8%	0.3	
ACT	1.4	0.6%	0.8	0.3%	1.6	0.7%	2.2	0.9%	10.0	4.3%	0.0	
Australia	215.3	1.7%	165.9	1.3%	232.2	1.9%	367.9	3.0%	766.9	6.2%	76.5	

Source: 6291.0.55.001 Data Cube EM2b

For further information, email labour.statistics@abs.gov.au
(<mailto:labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>).